

Sermon Group Discussion Questions

Center Point Church

Sermon Summary

In the sermon "More and More," Pastor Tyler Wittmer discusses the importance of living in a manner that pleases God and the necessity of extending love and kindness to others, inspired by the teachings from 1 Thessalonians. Wittmer begins with expressing gratitude for the congregation's goodwill and benevolence displayed during a fundraising event. The audience is encouraged to unite in praying for a distant pastor and college students on a spring trip. The focus on 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 revolves around the concept of Paul's urging of living in a way that pleases God, achievable through faith in Jesus Christ. Wittmer explores the theme of inherent sin, which separates humans from God, a divide only bridged by faith in Christ. As the sermon progresses, the discussion moves to sexual immorality and its disastrous effect on individuals and the wider community. Wittmer emphasizes the significance of maintaining sexual purity. Immoral actions, he suggests, are harmful not just to individuals but to the church as a community, advocating for approaches such as accountability, discipleship, and necessary church discipline to resolve such issues. The sermon also elaborates on Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian believers to demonstrate love and unity towards each other. Drawing on Jesus' teachings, Wittmer underlines the essence of humility, patience, and unity in Christian life. In conclusion, Pastor Wittmer underscores the existing love within the church and the divine teaching of loving others while urging the congregation to cultivate this feeling ever more deeply. He calls for believers to appreciate the value of love and unity in the community, reminding them of its extraordinary effects on their lives. The primary takeaway from this sermon encompasses the need to increase our capacity to love as taught by God and strive to lead lives pleasing to Him. The teachings draw from Biblical passages in 1 Thessalonians and Romans and highlight the importance of reflecting upon and following Jesus's lessons.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we live lives that are pleasing to God according to the teachings from 1 Thessalonians 4?

Pastor Wittmer emphasized that believers are able to please God because they are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.

In what ways can you apply these teachings in your daily life to please God?

2. What impact does sexual immorality have on individuals and the church community, as explained in the sermon?

Pastor Wittmer stated that sexual immorality hurts the individual believer and affects the church as a whole.

How can we as a church community support each other in maintaining purity and holiness?

3. How can we practice humility, gentleness, patience, and unity in order to express love for one another?

Pastor Wittmer mentioned these qualities as essential in showing genuine love in the body of Christ.

What are some specific actions or attitudes you can adopt to demonstrate these qualities in your interactions with others?

4. Why is it important to continue loving one another more and more, as taught by God?

The sermon emphasized that this kind of love is pleasing to God and is evident in the church's interactions, care, and prayers for each other.

In what area of your life do you feel the need to grow in love for others, and how can you work toward this growth?

5. How can we express gratitude for the community of believers in our church and avoid taking it for granted?

Pastor Wittmer expressed gratitude for the love and care evident at Centerpoint Church and urged the congregation not to take it for granted.

What actions can you take to show appreciation for your fellow believers and to support each other on an ongoing basis?

Sermon Transcript

Everyone, welcome to Centerpoint Church. If you have a Bible, flip open with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter four. Last week we covered the first eight verses. I'm going to pray. We will start back actually in verse one, but we will spend the majority of our time together in verses nine and ten.

1 Thessalonians, chapter four, starting back in verse one, just to gather some context. Finally, Paul writes. So the next two chapters, four and five, are the conclusion of Paul's thoughts to the church in Thessalonica. Then brothers, finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus. Paul writing to believers that as you received from us, that is Paul, Timothy, Silas, how you ought to walk and to please God just as you are doing.

This is more evidence that they are believers because they are in Christ and are pleasing God, which is something that we cannot do if we are apart from God.

When we are dead in our sin and trespasses, there is nothing that we can do that is pleasing to God. And I'll sometimes hear people say in regards to someone who does not know Christ, but

they are a good person. And while that might be true from a cultural sense or a civic sense or a philanthropic sense, from the perspective of God, our works apart from him are not pleasing to him. John Calvin once taught that fallen human beings still have the capacity for what he called civic virtue, that is, keeping laws and conventions of society and interacting with others in a way that is not vicious or evil. We all know non believers that are, from a civic perspective, kind, many that are generous, sometimes as generous or as kind as believers in Jesus.

The issue is that because of our fallen nature and sin, we are unable to please God by our own works or deeds apart from him. Paul writes in romans three, none are righteous. No, not one. He continues to say in Romans five. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given. But sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. This means we have all from our lineage inherited a sin nature that separates us from a holy God and are therefore unable, apart from him, to live a life that is pleasing to him. Because we are dead on sin, we needed to be born again.

We needed new life. It is by grace, through faith in Christ, that we are found, as Paul says, here in the Lord Jesus. And being in the Lord Jesus, we can live lives that are pleasing and honoring to God, lives that bring him glory. It is because the believers in Thessalonica, those in the church, had new life in the Lord Jesus that Paul says that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing a few things that I would have you circle and highlight, if you're following along on your own copy of scripture and you don't mind circling and highlighting things in it would be this how you ought to walk and to please God. That phrase is the driving force of the first twelve chapters, or twelve verses, rather, of this chapter, how you ought to walk and to please God.

How the believers in Thessalonica who are in the Lord Jesus, they have been saved by his grace and mercy. Paul then turns to how they ought to walk and to please God. That's the driving phrase. And as Paul notes, they're doing this. So if they're already doing this, kind of begs the question, why write them a letter instructing them to do things if he says you're already doing the things that he's instructing them to do?

Well, he tells us, Paul says, that you do so more and more, that you do so more and more. The believers in Thessalonica are already pleasing God in their walks. But the command is this, do this more and more. That is the exhortation. Continue to live lives that please God more and more.

Not that they are doing this for their salvation. They are already saved in the Lord Jesus. But because they are saved, Paul exhorts, live lives that are more and more pleasing to God, continue to give him more and more glory. Paul tells them how to do this, how to continue to grow in their walks, to live lives that are pleasing to God and give him glory. He says in verse two, for you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

So they are in the Lord Jesus. They've received instruction through the Lord Jesus, for this is the will of God. Verse three, your sanctification. I noted the difference between justification and sanctification last week. I want to do it again just for the sake of reminder.

Justification is the one time act when God by faith in Christ declares us righteous in Christ. Two

Corinthians five says it this way for our sake. He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We are justified by grace through faith in Christ, in the person, work, and resurrection of Jesus. That's our justification.

Our sanctification is an ongoing process. One writer summarized it this way. Sanctification, on the other hand, is the continual process of being made more holy. It is the progressive Conformity of the one who has been justified into the image of their savior through the work of the Holy Spirit. Like justification, sanctification is a work of grace through faith, and sanctification is possible because of the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

Sanctification is what two Corinthians 3:18 says, and we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from one degree of glory into another, and this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Sanctification is partnering with the Holy Spirit that is indwelling us, that has sealed us to be transformed more into the likeness of Jesus, that we grow to be more holy because he is holy. And Paul says, do that more and more. That's the will of God for our life, that we would be more and more like him by his grace and for our good and for his glory. Paul says in connection how to walk to please God.

He says, for this is the will of God, your sanctification. And Paul gets particular about these areas to continue to grow in for the church in Thessalonica. For the church in Thessalonica, he says he gives one area of sanctification that by the power of the spirit of God that is indwelling them, partnering with the spirit of God, they are to abstain from sexual immorality. Paul continues in verse three, for this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and in honor, not in the passion of lust, like the gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity but in holiness.

Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. This is what we addressed last week, that we seek holiness. Sexual morality does not only hurt the individual believer, but it affects the community. It affects the community inside the church, which we know anecdotally. We know, we know stories of those who have fallen into sin in this area and that it was devastating.

The effect that it can have not only on the individual, but in the life of a family, in the life of a congregation, in the life of a community that is viewing a congregation, sexual sin within a body, a church, is devastating. God made Eros, or passionate love, a love so powerful it can share in God's act of creation, that this is the type of love that God gave us, that we can take part in creating another made in his image. Eros is powerful, and within God's design, it is beautiful. But Paul knew that apart from God's design, it can be destructive not only in an individual's life, but within the life of a community. He says that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

For God has not called us for impurity, but holiness. Paul says that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter because the Lord is an avenger in these things. He had already warned them. Paul's not writing. I would remind us merely to individuals here.

Paul is telling the believers collectively as a church, that they should abstain from sexual immorality, that the church body should not be known or characterized by those outside the

church for acting in this way. The call to pursue purity is not merely individual, but it's also congregational church. It is our responsibility to hold one another accountable in these things. We can do that through accountability, one on one. I know many of us have accountability partners that share life with one another in areas of struggle and concern.

We do this through discipleship. Having someone or a small group that can continue to encourage growth in Christ and all that he has commanded. It was the sweetest thing. I was in a coffee shop yesterday writing this portion of the sermon, and I was watching two mothers with two of their younger daughters, and they were opening up God's word and just poring over God's word in discipleship, instructing. These mothers were instructing their daughters, and this is how we walk to please the Lord.

And as I was leaving, I just stopped, and I was like, hey, just local pastor here. And I looked at the younger girls and I was like, never take for granted this. This is so sweet that your parents love you so much that they would not only desire to give you the gospel, but their own lives in discipleship. In this way, this is meaningful. And they were like, whatever.

Strange man. See you. I was like, all right, I'll see you. Another means by which there can be accountability in the church for matters of sexual morality is through church discipline. This is an implication of Paul writing not merely to individuals, but to a whole congregation, that if there are those in the congregation that are known by the congregation to be living in unrepentant sexual sin, that the congregation and its leaders address that sin for the sake of the member of the congregation, for the sake of Christ.

One Corinthians has much to say on that topic. Paul continues to define what else sanctification includes to the church in Thessalonica after abstaining from sexual immorality. He says, finally then, brothers, we ask and urge you, verse one in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. This is the will of God. Your sanctification, verse nine.

Now, concerning brotherly love, the now here is in connection with the statement of walking in a way that is pleasing to God. So, in verse one of chapter four, just as you are doing verse ten, for that indeed is what you are doing. Verse one of chapter four, just as you are doing here in verse ten of what you were doing, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, do this more and more. Verse one, he says that you would do this more and more.

Verse ten. In regard to brotherly love, he says that you would do this more and more. The Greek is remarkably similar. Paul is exhorting, this is how you ought to walk and to please God you're doing this, continue to do this, continue to grow in this more and more brotherly love and affection as a congregation.

Paul had been pleased to learn of Timothy's report back of the love that they had for one another. He says in chapter three. But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you. And he even prayed in chapter three that they would continue to grow in affection and love for one another, Paul prays now, may our God and father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. Verse twelve.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you. The first point I want us to take away from our text verses nine and ten this morning is this loving others is pleasing to God. Loving others is pleasing to God. Remember, Paul speaking into the context of the congregation in Thessalonica, here now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, do this more and more.

Paul is thankful to know that the church in Thessalonica loves one another, that within the congregation they have been loving and caring for others. Well, Paul will turn his attention to those outside the congregation in verses eleven and twelve. We'll cover that next week. But for this morning inside the congregation, loving one another well, Jesus had taught his disciples the importance of loving others. In Matthew 22, someone asked him, teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?

And he said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. That is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

Don't miss the order of this love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. We don't want to flip that order. We are only able to love others well because Christ first loved us. Our love for others is a direct reflection of the love that we have for God. It is the love that we have for God and his holy spirit within us that empowers us then to love other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul tells us what this love looks like in Ephesians four. He says, I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with all patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. The love that we have for one another in church, walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called, is humble, is gentle, it is patient, it bears all things, and it's eager to maintain unity.

Matthew Henry, that famous biblical commentator, once said about what it means to bear with one another in love, that this love will pass by and put up with injuries without indulging anger or cherishing revenge, will be patient upon provocation and long patient. Or to say it like Peter says, it love covers a multitude of sins.

Church, family it is pleasing to God that as a church we would love one another and that we would care for one another and bear with one another and seek to maintain unity within the body of Christ. It's pleasing to God to love one another. I do want to draw a distinction here, that this type of love is pleasing to God, not merely a desire to please people. Does anyone else in here struggle with people pleasing or is that just pastors?

The desire to please people above pleasing God is where we can begin to get this twisted, because we can place people pleasing above pleasing God. I can tell when I start to do this in my own life, in my own ministry, because I start to get tired. I start replaying conversations in my head, start questioning things that I said, conversations that I've had.

Turns out I'm good at meditating.

I just need to refrain and reframe rather, and meditate on what the Lord would tell me. People pleasing is something I've struggled with since I was a kid. I'm sure I'm alone in this, but I knew I was in a tough spot with this a few years ago in ministry. About two years ago now, I was sitting at our kitchen table and it was pastor appreciation month, and I was sitting at our table and I was reading all of these cards of encouragement from people in our congregation for pastor appreciation month. And I was flipping through them and Alicia was sitting next to me at the table, and out loud I said this out of the heart.

The mouth speaks right out loud. I said, I bet if I stopped trying so hard, they wouldn't care about me. And I immediately thought two things about that. One, that's not true, and two, I was placing approval of others before pleasing God, and I knew I needed to ask for help in this area. One, I needed to repent to the Lord, and two, I needed help in this area.

And so I began a journey of seeing a counselor and a coach once a month just to talk to him about these types of things going on in my heart. This is an important distinction because we have likely all seen instances in churches where if the objective becomes to please people rather than to please God, if the goal becomes to please people, then a church might do any number of things to accomplish this. Failing to preach the full counsel of God's word, watering down discipleship and accountability. That's not what Paul is talking about here, and it's not what he modeled to them in his own ministry in Thessalonica. He told them in chapter two for our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive.

But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not to please man, but to please God, who tests our hearts, Paul says, for we never came with words of flattery, as you know, were the pretext for greed. God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you'd become very dear to us.

The type of love that Paul is talking about in Thessalonica was not aimed at pleasing people.

It was to love others as they had been loved by Christ, just as Jesus had taught them. Jesus says in John 13, a new commandment, I give you that you love one another just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And their love did not just apply to their church.

It did not just stay within the congregation there in Thessalonica. No, the love that he's talking about, it went on. It kept going. Verse ten of first, Thessalonians four, for that, indeed, is what you're doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. The love that they had for brothers and sisters in Christ applied to other congregations as well.

Centerpoint church this is the reason we so regularly pray for other churches from the pulpit. When I was doing ministry in Bowling Green, Kentucky, maybe because it was the size of the town or the immaturity of myself in ministry, but I felt so often that other churches and ministries were looked at as competition, not as congregations of Christ's body being shepherded and cared for. When we pray for other churches, we are acknowledging what the Lord is doing in northern Kentucky is greater than any one single church and praise God.

He is doing more than we know. And isn't that exciting to know that God is building his kingdom

and that he would allow and use people like us to help accomplish his will? Second thing I thought that we should address from our text this morning is this. So the first one is loving others is pleasing to God. Second is this loving others is taught by God.

Verse nine. Now, concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, Paul's already told us that in Thessalonica he shared with them the gospel, and that it came to them not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit. And they had received it with full conviction. Brother and sister, if we are in Christ, God has taught us to love one another. He has done so by his word and by the person of Jesus.

Hebrews one tells us, long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to us, to our fathers, by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Consider that type of love.

God loved his people who were separated from him in sin, dead and trespass. He loved those people so much that he would send his only son, who would put on flesh 100% God, 100% man. And he would live the life that you and I couldn't live. And he would die the death that you and I deserved, that we might get to have life with him eternally.

It's so simple, even a child can see it. That's love. This week, me and Roman, we've been listening to a lot of the chronicles of Narnia together. Mostly because I'm A-C-S. Lewis nerd, but also because he's really into it right now.

He's mostly into the battles. Don't let him fool you. But we were listening this week, and on Tuesday, we finished the lion, the witch in the wardrobe. And we were laying in bed, Roman's laying on my chest, and the book ends. And I said, buddy, who was your favorite character?

And he said, Aslan. And I said, oh, me too. Me too. And I said, why? And he said, because he's so strong.

He's so brave, he's courageous. And I said, buddy, you know who Aslan represents? He said, no. I said, buddy, Aslan represents Jesus. Like, he's.

He's so startled. And I was like, yeah, buddy. Just like how Aslan had to die so that Edmund, a traitor against Aslan, could be set free and could follow after him. And just like Aslan, after he died, was raised and came back, Jesus died and was raised that you could follow him. Roman and I was trying to downplay it.

It was really sweet, but I was like. And I said, one day, Roman, when you learn more about this, you can follow after Jesus, too. And he said, I want to follow after Jesus now. And then we had a long conversation about what that meant, and I put him to bed, and I cried like an infant. And then I said, I can't wait to tell you what that means.

More and more, on and on, more of what that means. But this type of love that we're talking

about, even a child can look at it and recognize it. It's a love that is safe enough for a child to wade into and a love that is deep enough for grown men and women to lose themselves in for eternity. That's the type of love. It's what caused Paul in Romans eight to burst out in praise.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution, or famine or nakedness or danger or sword, as it is written, for your sake we are being killed. All the day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we have experienced the love of Christ, if we have seen the beauty of what he has done for us, then our nature, our very nature, should reflect God's nature. Warren Wiersbe once wrote, fish do not need to attend classes to learn how to swim. And birds, by nature, put out their wings and flap them in order to fly. It is nature that determines action. Because a Christian has God's nature, he loves because God is love.

Do our walks with Jesus bear the marks of having experienced this type of love? Are we humble like our savior?

Paul writes in Philippians two, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant. Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Does the love that we have for others, does it bear humility?

Are we gentle like Jesus? He says in Matthew eleven, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Are we patient with others like Christ has been patient with us, God's word says. Or do you not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Are we patient with others like Christ has been patient with us? Do we bear with one another in love?

Jesus himself said, Jesus who he committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds.

You have been healed.

The type of love that we should have for one another is the type of love that Christ has had for us, a type of love that was humble and patient and gentle, and was even willing to bear what we couldn't, the weight and price of our sin. We love because he first loved us. Should we not therefore seek unity? Church family our gospel application this morning is this Centerpoint church. Do this more and more.

Do this more and more, Paul says, but we urge you, brothers in Thessalonica, to do this more and more. That's Paul's exhortation to the church. That is my exhortation to you. Do this more and more.

Centerpoint Church it is so evident that the love that we have for one another was taught by God. It is without a fail. Almost every single week we as elders, either in our group message or one on one individually, we talk about what a joy it is to see our church, family, love and care for one another so well. And can I just tell you, that's taught by God that comes from him.

It's evident through our times of prayer, through people lingering and enjoying one another after a service, through meals brought and people prayed for.

It's lived out in community groups and discipleship groups and friendships and relationships. Center Point Church I pray that we never take for granted the loving community that God has formed and is forming here because this is pleasing to God. Paul says the will of God for our life is our sanctification that we might come to look more and more like him. May we continue to love one another as he has loved us, to care for one another as he has cared for us, to bear one another's burdens and to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Centerpoint church it is such a joy for us to gather and to see the love that we have because I believe that that love was taught by God.

May we continue to do this more and more because it's pleasing to him. Let's pray.

Father, may we increase and abound in love for one another and for all. May we continue to walk in a way that is pleasing to you, loving one another more and more, just as you have revealed your love to us. God, help us to grow more like you, to live lives that are pleasing to you. How we ought to walk. God, we need your help in this, and we pray for your conviction that we might be conformed more into your image.

We pray these things now. Jesus.